

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

6p

VOL. 2 NO. 2

FEBRUARY 1972

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic... James Connolly

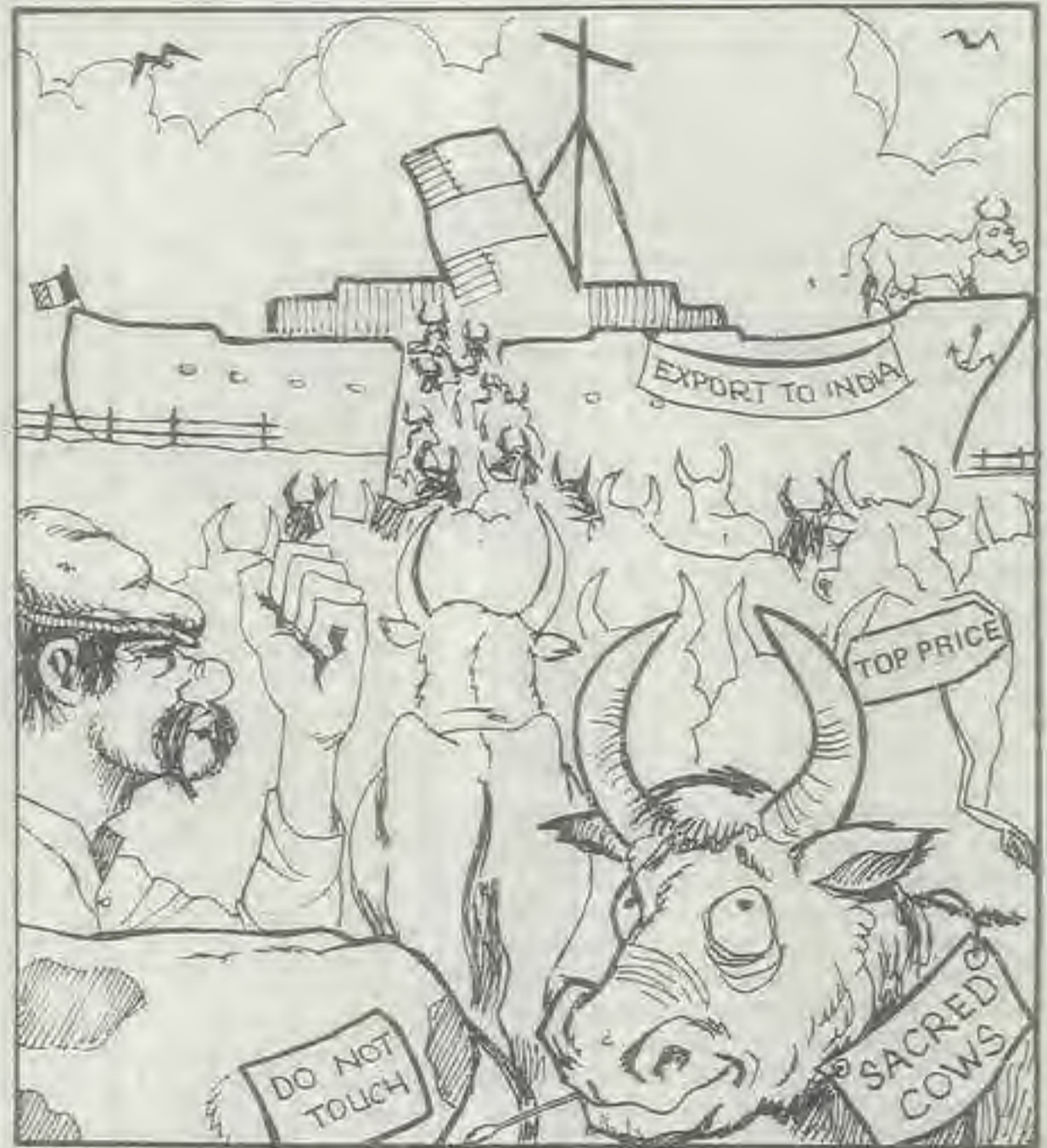
SEAN SOUTH'S "FREEDOM" PAGE 2



THE LIMERICK SOVIET PAGES 4-5



BREAK UP THE CATTLE RANCHES PAGE 6



contents

SEAN SOUTH'S "FREEDOM"	2
KNOCK SHOP	3
GREEN SHIELD FIDDLE	3
THE LIMERICK SOVIET	4-5
SHANNON PENNEY-PINCHING	6
NEW YEAR'S DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE	6
BREAK UP THE CATTLE RANCHES	6
WHY AN ELECTION?	7
THALIDOMIDE: THE CASE DRAGS ON	7-8
MONTH'S MIND	8
QUINNSWORTH CHEAP LABOUR SHIFT	8

Sean South's 'freedom'

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The annual Sean South commemoration ceremonies took place in Limerick during January. Seamus Costello spoke at the Sinn Fein (Gardiner Place) meeting and Gerry McCarthy (Cork) gave the oration at the Sinn Fein (Kevin St.) ceremony. Both speakers went through the annual ritual of calling on their members and the Irish people in general to "re-dedicate themselves to Sean South's ideals".

This year, however, because of the increase in Sinn Fein (Kevin St.) publications, an effort has been attempted to explain the ideals for which South lived and died. In the Republican Press, issued by the Republican Press Office, Limerick, (4/1/73), the following information was given:

Some men go into battle for a belief, as a means of achieving justice for their oppressed and exploited people in our country. Well meaning people have often depicted Sean as a dreamer striving for an unattainable Utopia as an unrealistic romantic whose ideas evolved from the mystic past of Gaelic greatness, Cucullán and Tir-na-nOg. Nothing could be further from the truth, as anyone who knew him will know, indeed a rational analysis of Sean's life work will soon dispel those notions and will clearly show that in all his activities Sean consistently sought ways and means to break the stranglehold of foreign domination of our country...

It must have dawned on Sean in his early years that the British connection with our country would have to be broken if we were to achieve our freedom. It is often said that Sean's death was a terrible waste, that his talents should have been utilised in other directions, that with his marvellous powers of oratory and his great potential as a writer, he would have better served the nation as an educator. But Sean understood the problems of our nation very clearly. That is why Sean took up arms, and resorted to violent methods to win justice for the Irish people. Sean understood in his clear logical way the simple truth:

But a rational analysis of the struggle to achieve our freedom shows that the simple truth of South and his present-day supporters is far from simple. Nowhere in South's writings or in the Republican Press is any indication given that the struggle for national unity inevitably involves military conflict with the Northern Protestant community. If, by some miracle, Sean South had forced a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, the result would not have been a united Ireland; it would have been national war leading to the establishment of a Protestant national state in the North to match the Catholic national state in the South.

In the Republican News, (5/1/73) the Belfast Provisional Sinn Fein paper, part of the oration in Irish given by Diarmaid O'Donnchadha, at the funeral of Sean South is republished. Speaking about the character of South, O'Donnchadha said:

Principle was a big thing with him, as was freedom and all things Irish. He died for freedom for my my, take and yours and for the sake of the coming generations. Not alone did he follow the path of Pearse and Emmet and Tone, but he studied our heritage on the history of the Gael from the dawn of history and acted accordingly. He put out two editions of An Gath (The Spear) and in an article in the last edition he wrote: "There is an end to nonsense; the time for talk is over". The talk and nonsense were finished as far as he was concerned.

But is it true that the nonsense is finished? I do not wish to see anyone here today only the person who is ready to follow Sean's example. Let his life

and his death be our teaching and our guide. Pearse's statement has often been heard in the last thirty years: Ireland Gaelic, Ireland Free. The world knows what Sean did for freedom. We who know him know what he did for the Irish language. He would not speak a word of English. Let that be our guide. His noble soul will be insulted by the use of one word of English here today.

O'Donnchadha himself was not "ready to follow Sean's example" for very long and left Sinn Fein shortly afterwards. But Sean South did not waver. He was a serious, consistent and dedicated Catholic nationalist and followed his beliefs to their logical conclusion by his active participation in the I.R.A. military campaign to "unite" Ireland. In his biography in Irish titled: *Maraidh Sean Sabhlaí Aireir* (Sean South Was Killed Last Night), Mannix Joyce makes this clear:

"There was nothing half-hearted about Sean South. He was connected, one after the other, with movements that would be described as militant by many people—Maria Duce, Seadairí na Saoirse and the I.R.A. He had strong beliefs but he had the courage to act on them."

South founded a branch of Maria Duce (Mary As Leader) in Limerick in the summer of 1949. He actively sold its paper *Fiat* (Let It Be Done), and supported its bitter campaign against ARTICLE 44 of the Constitution on the grounds that it did not give state recognition to the Catholic Church as the only true Church in the world. South also greatly pleased the pro-fascist and anti-semitic leader of Maria Duce, Fr. Denis Fahey by writing two letters to the *Limerick Leader* in January 1949, applauding that organisation's witch-hunt against Hollywood actors "suspected of having communist leanings."

Among the aims of Seadairí na Saoirse (Champions of Freedom) were "... to deal a death blow to English" ... and "to reply in Irish to English speakers".

On the 9th December 1956 Sean South left Limerick on his journey north to take part in the I.R.A.'s military campaign in Northern Ireland. He carried a bottle of Lourdes water in his pocket. As early as the 6th July 1948 he had written a letter to the editor of the *United Irishman* in which he stated: "I believe with Tone and the others that England is the cause of every evil in Ireland." From that date to his death on New Year's Day, 1957, South had written and spoken incessantly on this theme. He was a man of his word and now the time for action had arrived.

The I.R.A. raid in which South was killed is described in the two books, *The Secret Army*, by J. Bowyer Bell, and *The I.R.A.*, by Tim Pat Coogan. Coogan states:

"In a sense the Brookeborough ambush explains everything about the I.R.A. and its hold on Irish tradition. It shows all the courage, the self-sacrifice, the blundering and the emotion-

al appeal that have characterised and kept alive the I.R.A. spirit for centuries. The two young men who lost their lives in the Brookeborough affair, Fergal O'Hanlon and Sean South were given two of the biggest funerals in living memory—but during their lives there was never sufficient public support for their aims for them to receive proper military instruction or even to be correctly briefed on the target that claimed their lives..."

Bowyer Bell writes: *"The assault section piled out and ran toward the barracks with the mine. Inside Sergeant Kenneth Cordner was about to open the door into the street... In the truck Sean South was firing the Bren with Paddy O'Regan feeding him with the magazines... South could not get sufficient elevation to reach the second floor. Then the juice was turned on to detonate the mine. Nothing happened. With both the cover party and the assault party firing at the barracks, another mine was placed. The cable was straightened and the wires tipped. Nothing happened. Dave O'Connell, 2nd C/O fired his Thompson into the two mines. Nothing happened. By this time Cordner had reached the front room upstairs... He squeezed off a full twenty-five rounds in one long burst."*

According to Coogan, "South was hit first: like the others in the truck he was a sitting target from the upper windows of the barracks. One of the attackers threw a grenade at the barracks, but it bounced off a window-sill and fell under the truck. Just as this happened a burst of Bren-gun fire wounded Phil O'Donoghue, Sean Garland and Fergal O'Hanlon. Then the grenade went off and O'Donoghue was blown off the truck: as he hit the road he was struck by three bullets."

Bowyer Bell continues: *"The back of the truck was a butcher shop. Sean South was sprawled over the Bren-gun unconscious... Even in the shambles in the rear of the truck, there was no doubt that South was finished. O'Hanlon was almost gone... The Brookeborough raid became a legend overnight. Sean South and Fergal O'Hanlon martyrs within a week. The military shambles of January 7 was to be the source of a hundred ballads sung through the years." Bowyer Bell accurately concludes: "Most Irishmen, including many who followed Sean South's casket, thought the campaign madness and the I.R.A. irresponsible. Without public opinion or political leverage, the I.R.A. had only the gun."*

Sean South gave his life and his effort to extend the rule of Catholic Nationalism over the whole island. All other similar attempts to bring about a "United" Ireland through the subjugation of the Northern Protestant can only sharpen the existing deep divisions and further delay the real unity of people in the two communities.



THE CLIENT AND HIS LAWYERS

Two lawyers, when a knotty case was o'er, shook hands, and were as friendly as before,

"Zooks!!" said the client

"I would fain know how you can be

Friends, who were such foes just now?"

"Thou fool!" said one, "we lawyers, though so keen, like shears, ne'er cut ourselves, but what's between."

80880

KNOCK SHOP

A news report headed "Planners give Knock European status", in the 'Sunday Independent' of January 21 stated:

Detailed plans for the development of Mayo's Marian Shrine at Knock are due to be considered this week by members of the County Council.

A team of experts commissioned by the Council prepared the proposals, designed for implementation in time for special ceremonies in 1978 to mark the centenary of the Apparitions at the village. Council members have already held discussions on the recommendations for the centre, which attracts over 500,000 pilgrims and visitors annually.

Proposals outlined envisage provision of congregational spaces; bus stations, car parks; facilities for invalids and stretcher cases, and toilet accommodation. Approach roads to the village must be improved, since Knock is to be sited on the new national road network being established by the Government.

EUROPEAN SHRINE

The experts, who cite the village as "the pilgrimage centre of one of the great Marian Shrines of Europe," also provide for a shopping centre and religious stalls annexe.

Many people will ask about the money for these ambitious plans. The report also supplied this information. Knock school teacher and Co. Councillor, Mr. P. J. Morley, stated: "Financial support will, we hope, be forthcoming from the Department and certain other official organisations."

No details of the religious aspects of the shrine were given nor did the report describe the apparitions that made Knock famous and some of its business people wealthy. Perhaps this emphasis on the economic rather than the religious is to become characteristic of the "new", changed *Sunday Independent*.

But some details of the apparitions at Knock were given by Andrew Dunlop in his book, *Fifty Years of Irish Journalism*. Dunlop wrote:

"My next contribution as special correspondent of the 'Daily News' was an inquiry into the alleged miracles at Knock, County Mayo, in March, 1880. . . I spent two days at Knock seeking information, my principal informants being Archdeacon Kavanagh, the parish priest, and several people, including the Archdeacon's servant girl, who stated they had seen the apparition.

"... I revisited Knock in June 1882. . . I called on Archdeacon Kavanagh, and I had no difficulty in discovering that my reception was not over cordial, and in that respect was very different from that which I received on my first visit. I found very few 'pilgrims' on this occasion. Moreover, the wall, of the chapel on which the 'apparition' was said to have appeared (and the plaster picked from which was credited with being the curing agency), was now carefully re-plastered, and there was no sign of any attempt on the part of visitors to attack the new wall-covering. The interior of the chapel had also been greatly improved, the cost being defrayed, as I was given to understand, from the offerings of 'pilgrims'.

"A curious coincidence may be mentioned, in this connection. Miss Bourke whose 'cure' by a visit to Knock chapel had been prominently recorded by Mr. Thomas Sexton, then, or afterwards, M. P. (Mr. Sexton himself being my informant), in 'The Weekly News', but who, upon my visit in 1880, a fortnight later, was dead. . . Archdeacon Kavanagh had on the first occasion related her visit to the chapel and supposed 'cure', but had to wind up with the observation, 'But poor thing she is dead since'. The interval between her 'cure' and her death was only two or three weeks."

The "offerings" of the 500,000 annual pilgrims is now doing something more than replastering the chapel wall.

In the North of England there is a saying, "Where there's muck there's money." In South Mayo it is obvious that where there's religious hope there's also economic faith—and, the prospect of more money. And the plan to turn Knock into a Common Market Super-Shrine is based on economic faith rather than on religious hope. The *Independent* report, like Knock itself, had its priorities in the right order.

GREEN SHIELD FIDDLE

The Green Shield Trading Stamp Company (Ireland) Limited has expressed great 'shock' at the recommendation contained in the recent report of the Prices and Incomes Commission that trading stamps be abolished. After a suitable display of mock indignation, the company has mounted an extensive and expensive public relations campaign designed to swing public opinion behind its opposition to the commission's recommendation.

The company, having already eliminated its American competitors in Britain and established a profitable monopoly, must secretly be surprised that its run of uninterrupted luck and profits lasted so long. Its easy conquest of the 'green' Irish market, represents one of the

biggest business 'killings' since Paul Singer scooped the pool with stamps of a different hue.

In its edition of January 3, *Hibernia* had this to say of the Prices and Incomes Commission's recommendation: "Table 3 is a real eye opener, of 40 items listed, it shows that substantially more Green Shield Stamps are required to redeem 'gifts' in this country than in the U.K. on all but 4 items. This might be tolerable except that it is shown that the ordinary retail price of many of the items is actually lower in Ireland than in the U.K. For instance, although the average price of a 22" Crown 'Fiesta' suitcase is £4.12 in Ireland compared to £5.50 in the U.K., it requires 8,930 stamps compared to only 8,000 in the U.K. to get one of these 'gifts'."

On average the commission reports that the Green Shield 'price' for an item is 22% higher than the average retail price. But the company does not make its biggest profits from the simple selling of stamps. Green Shield's vast resources have been built up through investment and speculation.

A feature of the company's scheme is that the stamps sold cannot be redeemed except over a long period (the time required to fill the required number of books of stamps and to obtain the 'gift' of one's choice). Green Shield, however, loses no time in investing the money returns in 'gift edge' stocks and shares as well as in 'real estate', an area in which it has invested much of the proceeds from the stamp fiddle. The company does not, needless to say, distribute the profits and dividends from these investments as extra 'gifts' among its stamp-buyers.

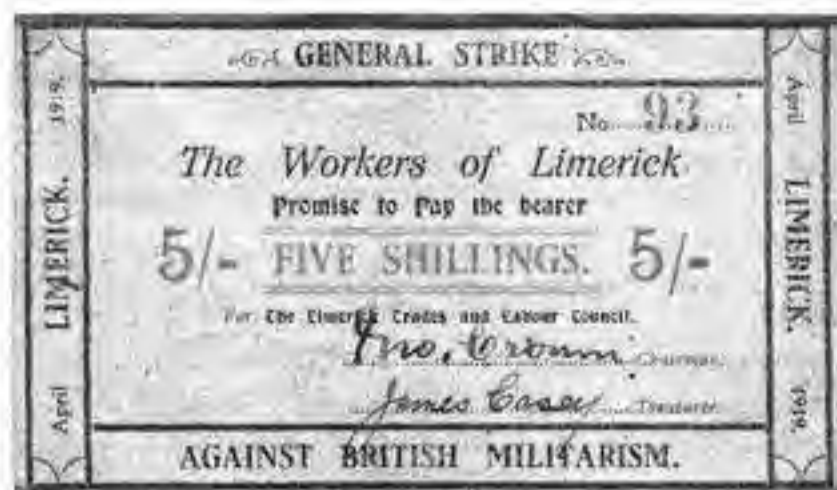
The effect of the Green Shield operation is not only to force shopkeepers to increase their prices but to eliminate any real form of price-cutting as a means of competition. This most parasitic of capitalist 'enterprises' has nothing but costly gimmickry to offer the general public.

Sales gimmicks usually benefit shopkeepers, advertisers and industrialists. In the case of Green Shield Stamps, however, the gimmickry is designed to benefit almost entirely the company concerned and is at the total expense of the people who shop at the stamp shops.

But after such a long and pleasant innings, why the sudden outbreak of criticism against the stamps? It is certainly not because the capitalist system wants to give a better deal to the working class in the matter of shopping. It may be nearer the mark to say that other capitalist sections in the trading sectors are bringing pressure to bear because their slice of the stamp racket is not big enough.

But the abolition of the stamps would not lead to any substantial or long-term gain by consumers. It is a reasonable assumption that it would not take long to introduce for some other sales gimmick to gull the public in filling the vacuum left by the stamps.

A fundamental question remains to be answered. Instead of workers and housewives plaintively wailing about the cost of living, it might be far more effective if they asked why the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was allowed to impose the straitjacket of a national wage agreement on Irish workers in the middle of a rising prices blitz.



The sudden end of the Limerick strike caused some discussion and disagreement in the city. In an editorial headed, "The Strike—And After," the local paper, *The Munster News*, of April 26, 1919, commented:

The general strike which commenced with such startling suddenness on the morning of last Monday week ended almost as abruptly on Thursday evening, having run its course amidst many fluctuations of feeling on the part of those who personally or by proxy, so to speak, played a prominent part in what may have been in many ways one of the most memorable episodes in the lives of Limerick people for more than a century . . . The announcement made by a Mr. Stockman, of the English Labour Party, that Irish branches of English Trades Unions could not take part in a strike involving a political issue very probably marked the turning point of the strike; because, although it was stated that members of some such branches in Limerick had actually received strike pay, the fact remains that the expected general co-operation in the anti-permit protest did not materialise; hence the decision on Thursday night to effect what has been looked on in the light of a compromise.

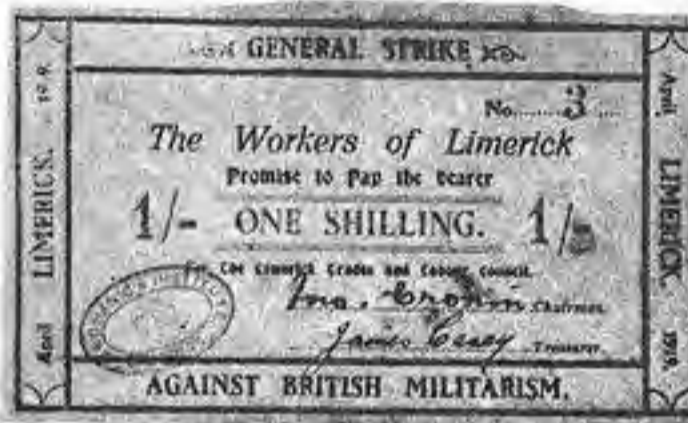
The editorial also examines another turning point of the strike: the joint letter sent to the strike committee by the Catholic bishop of Limerick, Alphonsus O'Mara, following their meeting with General Griffin, Commandant of the special military area. The *Munster News* editorial continues:

The struggle would have dragged on for some time longer had not his Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Hallinan and the Mayor, as representing the spiritual and temporal interests of the citizens, sent a joint letter to the Trades Council on Thursday, requesting the immediate end of the strike; and that the ready compliance with that request was wise will be readily acknowledged by everyone who has at heart the interests of Limerick as a whole—interests that suffered severely during the continuance of the strike.

While the contents of the joint letter sent by the Bishop and the Mayor were not publicly disclosed nor published in the local or national press, it is clear that this intervention—and not the attitude of British trade unions—was the decisive factor in finishing the strike. A report in the *Irish Times* (April 26) stated: ". . . The opinion is undoubtedly entertained that the early attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy in supporting the strikers was not consistently pursued. It is thought that their views on the situation completely changed when they learned the drastic plans submitted by the Labour Executive to force the issue. They naturally discounted extreme measures and the Executive knowing that the people would be guided by their clergy, wisely abandoned their plans . . ."

This statement was further reinforced by the sermon given by Rev. W. Dwane, Administrator of St. Michael's Church, when speaking at the 12 o'clock Mass, on Sunday, April 27, when he said: "What he wished to state was that neither his Lordship nor the clergy were consulted before the strike was declared, and were teetotally opposed to its continuance."

It was probable that it was to this attitude of the clergy that two delegates to the 1919 annual conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress referred when discussing the strike. A Limerick delegate



criticised the executive because its delay in going to the strike area "allowed certain under-currents to get to work to sap and undermine the movement in Limerick." A Cork delegate made a similar claim when he said that the strike was ended as a "result of subterranean influences."

Tom Johnson, replying to the debate at the conference had explained the attitude of the executive. "Their proposal was that the men and women of Limerick, who, they believed were resolved and determined to sacrifice much for the cause they were fighting should evacuate their city and leave it an empty shell in the hands of the military. They had made arrangements for housing and feeding the people of Limerick, if they agreed to the Executive's proposition." The local strike committee had rejected this proposal on the grounds that it was impractical, and because of the clergy's opposition to the plan.

A number of questions arise from the strike. Why did the soviet take place in a small provincial city at that particular time? What were the underlying political factors that caused the sharp outbreak of working class consciousness? An examination of the strike and its leaders shows that a combination of influences operating on Irish workers in 1919 found expression in the Limerick struggle.

THE LIMERICK SOVIET

by jim kemmy

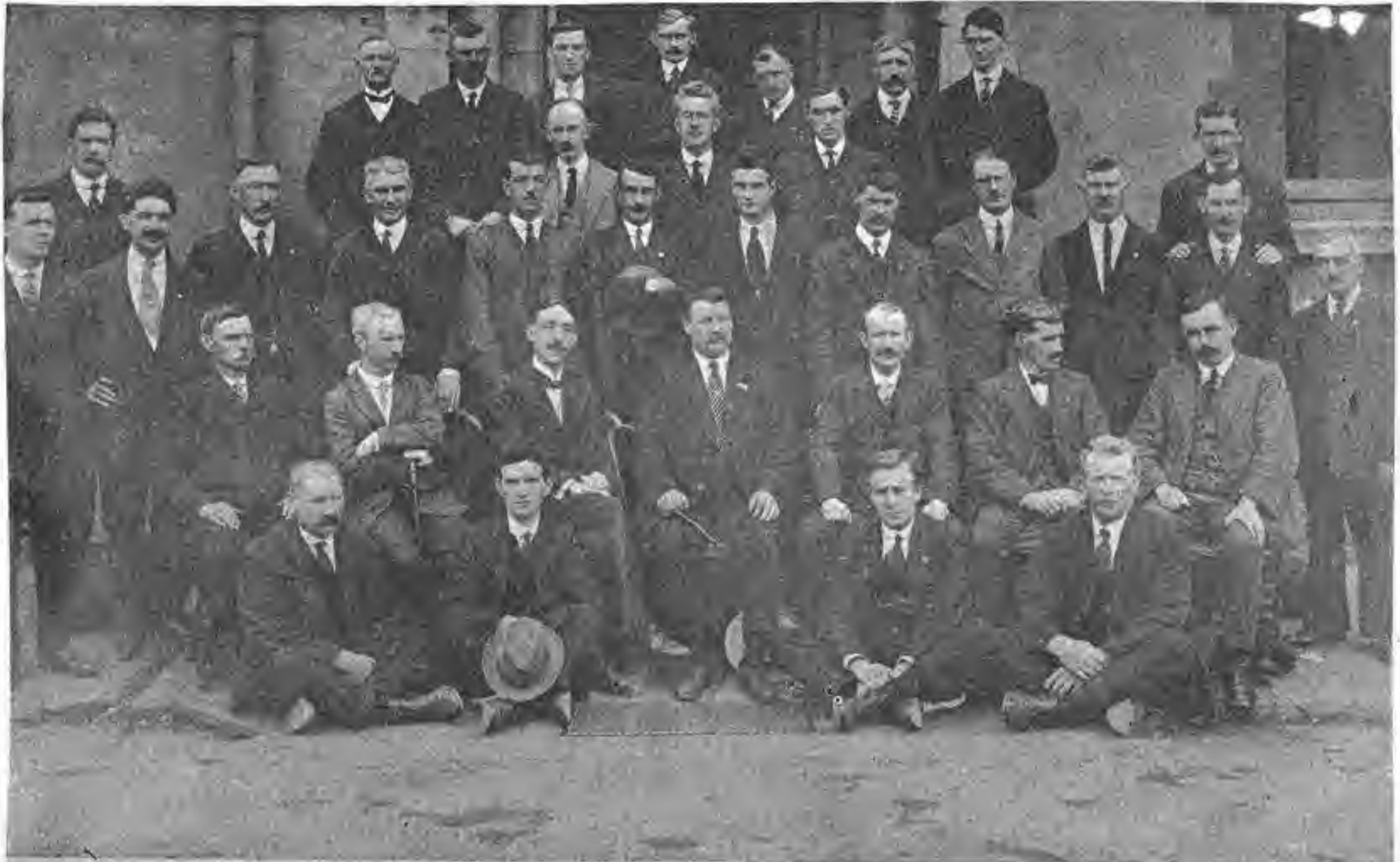
PART 11

In Ireland, the impact of the 1913 Lockout in Dublin had been felt by workers throughout the country. Limerick workers, notably the Pork Butchers' Society, rallied to aid the starving Dublin workers. The writings of James Connolly and the contribution of the Citizen Army to the 1916 Rising further developed the growing political awareness. This consciousness found an outlet in the publication of *The Bottom Dog*, the first Limerick workers' paper, the first edition of which appeared on 20th October, 1917. Labour Day was celebrated for the first time by the Limerick workers on 1st May, 1918 when a big labour and trade union demonstration was held in the city. A report in the *Limerick Chronicle* described the occasion: "It was a striking of the strength and solidarity of organised labour in the city, and the appeal of the local Trades and Labour Council to celebrate the day was most successful."

Events on a world scale also had repercussions in Limerick. The shock effects of the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, only 18 months earlier, and the aftermath of the First World War transformed Eastern and Western Europe after 1918 into a stirring cauldron of revolutionary turmoil never since equalled. A wave of political and industrial unrest swept across the continent: this brought about an insurrection in Berlin, a soviet in Munich, a commune in Budapest, a general strike in Vienna, a rising in Vratsa and Plovdiv, the occupation of factories by Turin workers led by Antonio Gramsci, the struggle for the forty-hour week in Glasgow and Belfast and the big strikes in Liverpool, Southampton, Tyneside and London. During this period the whole capitalist order seemed to be staggering to the brink of a revolutionary overthrow.

Answering a question from a *Freeman's Journal* reporter on the nature of the Limerick strike, Tom Johnson replied:

"There is an allegation that this is a political strike. I admit that it is political, but only in the sense that the fight against conscription was political, but it is by no means a party political fight." Later during the Irish T.U.C. debate on the soviet, Johnson said: "Let them remember what the strike was. It was a protest, and the Limerick Committee emphasised the fact, against a military tyranny. They did not expect to beat the British Army. They intended to protest and their protest was effective; and they did the wise thing in the end. Rather than have one going back today and another tomorrow they called the strike off . . . Supposing they could have remained out for three months, what would have



STRIKE COMMITTEE (Limerick Workers' Strike against British Militarism), APRIL, 1919.

happened? They would have resumed employment at the end of three months exactly as they did at the end of two weeks. A strike in the city of Limerick would not defeat the British Army. That was the central fact of the situation."

While some of the leaders of the soviet had a definite socialist ideology, it is clear that the strike was motivated by nationalist as well as socialist ideals. The strategy of the Sinn Fein members involved was to keep the strike going as long as possible and to support it by picketing activities and the provision of food from outside.

The strike leaders had no clear-cut or

long-term socialist plan of campaign, and did not persist as a working class force after the ending of the soviet. The treasurer of the committee, James Casey, became Mayor of Limerick in 1921 after the killings of Mayor George Clancy and former Mayor Michael O'Callaghan. He remained a member of the Labour Party all his life. Other leaders of the strike divided on the Civil War issue and moved away from independent working class politics. The strike, despite its short-term solidarity, failed to develop any lasting political consciousness, being more a natural, spontaneous protest than a deliberate workers' take-over bid. The leaders' determination to change from

one social system to another wilted under the prevailing pressures and overwhelming forces surrounding them.

This, however, should not diminish the struggle of the Limerick workers and the achievements of the soviet. The leaders came as near as they could to practical socialism, and their theory was largely produced by passionate outrage against intolerable conditions. The focus of the struggle was not a local, blind-alley one but was part of an international working class ferment. Despite its ideological shortcomings, the strike is an important part of Limerick working class history, and its lessons deserve serious consideration. (Irid)

All the Limerick shops I passed were blinded or shuttered. In the grey light, black lines of people moved desolately up and down, not allowed to congregate and apparently not wanting to remain in homes they were weary of. A few candles flickered in windows. . .

At the door of a river street house, I mounted gritty stone steps. A red-badged man opened the door part way. As soon as I told him I was an American journalist, the suspicious look on his face vanished. With much cordiality he invited me to come upstairs. While he knocked on a consultation door, he bade me wait. . . On the invitation to come in, I entered a badly lit room where workmen sat at a long black scratched table. In the empty chair at the end of the

table opposite the chairman, I was invited to sit down. As I asked my questions, every head was turned towards me. . .

"Yes, this is a soviet," said John Cronin, the carpenter who was father of the baby soviet. "Why did we form it? Why do we pit people's rule against military rule? Of course, as workers, we are against all military. But our particular grievance against the British military is this: when the town was unjustly proclaimed, the cordon was drawn to leave out a factory part of the town beyond the bridges. We had to ask the soldiers for permits to earn our daily bread.

"You have seen how we have thrown the crank into production. But some activities are permitted to continue. Bakers are work-

ing under our orders. The kept press is killed, but we have substituted our own paper". He held up a small sheet which said in large letters: The Workers Bulletin Issued by the Limerick Proletariat.

" . . . We have, by the way, felt the sympathy of the union men in the army sent to guard us. A whole Scotch regiment had to be sent home because it was letting workers go back and forth without passes.

" . . . A few of the workers red-badged guards came to herald the approach of the workers, and then sat down outside the hall. St. Munchin's chapel bell struck the Angelus. The red-badged guards rose and blessed themselves.

What's The Matter With Ireland? by Ruth Russell.

SHANNON Penney-Pinching

Four girls employed at Shannon Town Centre still don't know who was employing them for two weeks between the end of August and the beginning of September last year—but they do know that they did not get any pay for two weeks.

It all happened when Quinnsworth tied up with Powers, and Cannocks of Limerick, who had been sub-tenants in the Quinnsworth store, had to move out to make way for Penneys, the clothing section of the Powers empire.

The four girls were employed by Cannocks when the shop opened at Shannon the previous March. When the Penneys take-over was imminent they were told that they too were being taken over, although they were also offered jobs elsewhere with the Limerick company.

The four decided to stay on at Shannon. But when Cannocks wound up business at Shannon in August, Penneys did not open until two weeks later, and none of the girls got any pay.

They took their case to the Penneys management, but were referred to Cannocks, and of course Cannocks passed them back to Penneys. Nobody has come up with any explanation or solution, so for the four girls there were only 50 pay weeks in 1972.

Because they were supposed to have continuity of service on the transfer from Cannocks to Penneys, they did not get any holiday pay, neither were they offered redundancy. So the old story continues—capitalists merge to increase their profits and workers pay the price.

Some interesting facts about Cannocks were disclosed by Mr. J. B. Gubbins, chairman of the board of directors, in a statement to the Shareholders in October of last year. The company's dividends to shareholders for the previous year were raised from £8,288 to £10,294. "With hoped improvement in the fortunes of your company we hope—at least—to maintain this dividend in the coming year," Mr. Gubbins informed his shareholders.

Reporting on the chairman's statement, the 'Limerick Chronicle' (October 7) stated: "Cannock, the Limerick company is expected to spread its wings further, in the very near future. The company has £275,679 lying idly in the kitty and negotiations are at present going on in an effort to invest it in suitable takeovers."

The worry of the £275,679 "lying idle in the kitty" is a heavy one. Perhaps a little of the burden could be relieved by Cannocks giving the Shannon working girls their due.

NEW YEAR'S DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE

If your notion of homelessness in Britain means nothing more than a vague idea of a few glassy-eyed old men who have slipped through the social services net to the damp railway arches of Charing Cross Bridge, then you are obviously unaware of some 19,000 English families (many first-generation Irish) equally deprived.

Following the Grieve Report on Homelessness in London (1971), Shelter published the 'Grieve Report' which is a documented list of case histories experienced by one Shelter worker, Ron Bailey, (formerly of the Family Squatters Association), over the past 12 months.

Under part three of the 1948 National Assistance Act (which was supposed to supersede the existing medieval Poor Laws), "It shall be the duty of every local authority to provide temporary accommodation to persons in urgent need thereof . . . however such homelessness occurred", i.e. eviction, fire, floods, broken marriages, etc. Despite this clear obligation of local authorities, in 1971 there were 24,691 families desperate enough to apply for emergency accommodation, but only 5,630 were admitted. Bailey found that the 19,000 families deprived of their rights were forced to either double up with relatives, often already overcrowded, squat illegally in derelict buildings and dumped vehicles, or, in the case of thousands of families, put the children into care with local authorities.

The plight of those granted temporary accommodation is often little better than those refused. This accommodation can mean 19th-century workhouses, redundant police stations and insanitary caravan sites. Regulations in these lodgings can be punitive, no husbands, no TVs, no weekend out, (if you have anywhere to go you cannot be homeless), and strict curfews.

A small overflow from the hostels particularly in London, are put up—illegally—in 'Guest Houses' that range in quality from dilapidated properties let to the Councils at very high rents by private landlords, to the Kennedy Hotel in Euston which Westminster has been known to hire.

From this report it will be clearly seen that Britain, despite its welfare state and its generally superior housing record, has, like Southern Ireland, failed to solve its housing shortage. The lack of decent houses is a problem common to all the advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America. In analysing the housing question a hundred years ago, Engels stated:

"As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated settlement of the housing question or any other question affecting the lot of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of subsistence and instruments of labour by the working class itself."

BREAK UP THE CATTLE RANCHES

J. J. FINNAN

Come, true men, nerve your heart and hands,
And grid yourself for battle;
The Lord made Ireland's teeming lands
For men and not for cattle;
For many men who sweat from toil,
And not for drones with panches,
Whose sway pollutes our sacred soil,
The Lord tules that rules the ranches.

Too long they lived on "easy street,"
And on our heart's blood fattened,
And on the poor man wiped their feet,
As mute he lay down flattened.
Those days are gone, we'll make them fly,
Or drive them to their haunches,
And this shall be our battle cry,
"Break up the cattle ranches."

Come on, bold boys, don't lag behind,
Come on, bold boys, together;
Don't trim your sails to catch the wind,
For this is stormy weather.
And every true man to be found,
If warm his heart and staunch is,
Shall have a slice of Ireland's ground,
When we'll break up the ranches.

The brand of serf no more we'll bear,
Let whiners fawn and wear it,
The baleful breath that taints the air,
Is now too foul to bear it.
So we'll grub out the Upas tree,
The root and all the branches,
For true men all who would be free,
Must first break up the ranches.

The youths who now seek foreign lands,
We'll deem them knaves and traitors,
We want stout hearts and willing hands,
But shall dispense with praters;
Proclaim, resolve in field and street,
At Land and Labour branches—
Let hand clasps say, when neighbours meet:
"Break up the cattle ranches."

Don't be disheartened or advised
By timid men or peace men;
Don't be dismayed or terrorised,
By bailiffs or policemen;
We'll make a breach that none can stop,
Like Alpine's avalanches,
For in the fight we'll be on top,
And burst the cattle ranches.

Then, true men, nerve your heart and hands,
And grid yourselves for battle;
The Lord made Ireland's teeming lands,
For men and not for cattle.
Let England brag and show her strength,
At each new ship she launches,
The time has come, my boys, at length,
To down the cattle ranches.

LUSTFUL MATING

Miss Fine Gael and Mr. Fakir Labour were married in Leinster House last night. "It was a shotgun wedding", said a Fianna Fail spokesman, "so we don't expect anything good to come of it. The Irish people have no time for mixed marriages."

Why an election?

The announcement by Jack Lynch that a general election will be held on February 28 has taken most people by surprise. What is the reason for Lynch's move at this particular time?

With the Provisional I.R.A. campaign in Northern Ireland rapidly running off steam, the time has come for Fianna Fail to adopt a new strategy. Lynch has already won a complete tactical victory over the Blaney/Boland faction and is now seeking to consolidate this victory through a general election.

Lynch is still forced by political expediency to retain the formality of the one-nation claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland, but he has now been forced by the reality of the situation, and the consequences of recent events developing from this reality, to breakthrough to the realisation that this claim will never be achieved by undemocratic means. The myth of one Irish nation will be allowed to remain, but what cannot remain is the policy of the coercion of Northern Ireland.

For the next month the people will be bombarded with slogans, gimmicks and promises, and all in the name of "democracy". In the midst of this circus of high pressure "salesmanship", it is essential for Irish workers to be aware of the capitalist nature of all three parties. The lack of a socialist alternative underlines the vital need for a real working class party. Faced with the mores of truth of the "working arrangement" between Labour and Fine Gael, the antics of the "socialists" in the Labour Party should however make interesting viewing.



THALIDOMIDE

Since the two-part story of the Thalidomide scandal published in the "Limerick Socialist" during the months of November and December last, the issue has assumed national importance with regular daily bulletins on progress (or lack of progress) in the campaign against the drug manufacturers a regular lead feature in both the newspapers and the radio and television news.

In Britain, the situation has snowballed in what might superficially appear as remarkable fashion. The original 1971 offer of £3.25 million by Distillers Biochemical, which was intended to serve as a fund for the children maimed by the horror drug, has been increased in grudging stages until it presently stands at the apparently handsome level of £20 million. This has come about under strong pressure from practically all the forces of the British establishment, from the Daily Express to the Sunday Times, from a numerically strong and representative cross-section of parliamentary opinion under the banner of the All-Party Committee for the Disabled, from an ever-growing number of the company's shareholders, including numerous city and county councils, as well as investment companies, banks, life assurance companies, etc.—these, it might be added, are the outward and visible pressures that have been applied in an attempt to make one of Britain's largest and most profitable enterprises acknowledge its responsibilities to the 400 or so children born with irreparable congenital deformities as a result of that company's marketing of the disaster drug.

We shall never know what pressures were applied behind the scenes, but it can readily be assumed that the attack on Distillers was no mealy-mouthed affair. The question must be asked: what has prompted the forces of big business to come to this unanimous decision that the perpetrators of the thalidomide tragedy at least in some degree make reparation for the wrongs done?

It must first clearly be understood that the British company's initial tactic was—as with the originators of the drug in West Germany, Chemie Grunenthal—to ignore the problem in the hope that it would go away. An item such as the disbursement of a minute fraction of the company's profits towards the establishment of a charitable fund looms large in a capitalist balance sheet at an annual general meeting, and could provoke grubby arguments among an even grubbier set of shareholders.

So the first idea was to engage a few of the more obnoxious growths of bourgeois society, known under the collective title of lawyers to erect the fiction that the company were only too anxious to establish a fund for the thalidomide-damaged children, but that unfortunately they were finding it difficult to settle on a figure! In this was the company could trundle out the old legal cliché about 'contempt of court' whenever any crusading journalist or newspaper attempted to bring the matter to wider public attention. This practice worked very well for ten years or so, but the Sunday

the case drags on

by JOHN BOYLE

Times, as was described in a previous article, having doubtless assured themselves of political and legal support, took on the company.

It can scarcely be assumed that British imperialism has suddenly developed a conscience. The reason, not surprisingly, turns out to have a financial aspect. Since the proposed new offer from Distillers the company's share prices is now on an upward spiral following upon the period of market instability which followed the threatened boycott of the company's whiskey and gin products by several national retail outlets.

The sickening hypocrisy of the entire charade is serving to adequately camouflage that fact that for ten long years the Distillers company and the liberal wing of the British mass media singularly failed to alleviate the distress caused affected families in the ways respectively open to them.

In Britain the matter will now be quietly buried. Justice will have been seen to be done. That imprecise entity, "Society", will have repaid its debt. The combatants have signalled the end of the game. In an editorial on January 7, 1973, the Sunday Times, responding to the latest revised Distillers offer, stated clearly:

"This is not a moment for rapture but it is a moment for relief. There are some crucial details to settle to the satisfaction of the parents, but in our view (our emphasis) the money now offered by Distillers at last begins to offer the prospect of justice."

In subsequent issues of the Sunday Times the subject has receded in importance to the extent that in the edition of the 21st January 1973, there is nothing at all to be read about thalidomide, not even so much as a reader's letter. The comparison with the blanket coverage at the height of the campaign is most marked. And in its edition of the 28th January the paper adroitly shifted emphasis to Irish child victims in a comparatively short report. Paul Foot, who in a piece in the "New Statesman" of the 12th January 1973, wrote:

"... in spite of the mounting hypocrisy on both sides, and the still puny offer from the company, there is in the last few weeks' developments an element of triumph. On 11th October last year Sir Alexander McDonald, Distillers' chairman, wrote to Tony Lyons, a shareholder, outlining the unsurmountable legal objections to "giving away £20 million of the company's funds" (as he then chose to put it). It was, he wrote, clearly out of the question that so large a sum could be handed over. Less than three months later Sir Alexander (or some luckless Lloyd's underwriters) are forced to 'give way' even more. The sheer enormity of the horror which Distillers unleashed has been exposed with such ferocity

continued on back page

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The case drags on

continued from page 7

that they have been forced twice to double their 'final' offer to seven times what Mr. Justice Hinchiffe just five years ago declared was 'fair and just'.

"The danger is that everyone will slap themselves on the back, assure themselves that we really do have a free press and humanitarian financial institutions, and ignore the real causes of the thalidomide disaster, which are rooted in the irresponsible power of bigger and bigger drug companies. . . . There is every guarantee of even better dividends for Distillers shareholders next year, but no guarantee that even worse disasters than thalidomide will not occur again."

In Ireland a campaign similar to that mounted in England is at time of writing well under way. The national newspapers daily accord front page space to the latest developments. Dr. John O'Connell, Labour T.D., has informally taken

over the thalidomide campaign and is milking it for all that it's worth. When on a *Tangents* interview one of the unfortunate parents was unable, under pressure from glib interviewer Cathal O'Shannon, to express the objectives of the recently-formed parents' association of thalidomide children, the publicity-conscious Dr. O'Connell rushed eagerly into the breach. The doctor's gimmick trip to Germany is a natural follow-up to his earlier "Strokes".

America's consumer ombudsman, Ralph Nadar, has also seen an opportunity to promote himself and his organization on this side of the Atlantic in the particular circumstances which apply to the Irish children. His representative has, however, researched the matter and his intervention has at the least succeeded in embarrassing the Minister for Health and his top Department officials. The seven months interval that elapsed between the Government's first becoming aware of the dangers of the drug, Seftinol, and their public warning about the possible dangers inherent in using it is beginning to seem a damning piece of evidence.

(In all likelihood, however, the "oversight" resulted from the sort of institutionalized bureaucracy which is one of the main characteristics of the Civil Service and which actively inhibits, if not positively forbids, officials in that body from initiating any activity which does not fall within a pretty strictly defined and routine sphere of operation).

It is difficult to state just what will be the outcome of the campaign now transplanted across the Irish sea. The essential difference in the cases of those affected in the two countries is that in Britain the distributors of the drug were a home-grown, thoroughly "respectable," and very wealthy firm. Chemie Grunenthal, the firm who originally developed the drug and who distributed the version which was marketed in Ireland, is in the Irish context neither home-grown nor in fact very respectable or very wealthy. (It was, in fact, formed just after the Second World War, and its participation in the West German economic post-war miracle was to some degree ruptured by the thalidomide scandal).

The attitude that has been wafted across from one side of the Common Market to its furthest outpost that what's good enough for the German parents is good enough for the Irish is likely to prevail. In this case the only alternative open to bring the compensatory payments available to the 84 or so Irish victims up to the level now obtaining in Britain. This may well happen, if media pressure is maintained.

What will it all prove? The exposure of some of the depths of corruption and hypocrisy that prevail in capitalist and government circles caused sections of the ruling class to be worried about their public image. The newspaper campaign thus played a useful role in supporting the system galvanizing the drug companies and government out of ten years' inactivity. Hard cash, which is what those affected now need most, is the most precious commodity in capitalist society and the thalidomide affair indicates to what lengths the ruling class will go to hold onto it.

The system has weathered its storm in the test-tube; the mistake is about to be swept under the "compensation" carpet; and the child victims and their parents suffer on.

THE MONTH'S MIND

RUMOURS

Mr. Maureen Ahern has denied rumours that she wants to be the next President. "A pity," said a Corbally spokesman. "She writes a good letter and nates vocational committees."

WATCH-DOG

Limerick Trades Council has set up a watch-dog committee to review prices. At the last meeting a motion to purchase an albatross was passed. "It should have an exciting time," a delegate said, "watching the prices go by."

DEAD AND GONE?

For the benefit of Limerick Leader readers who read the review of Kevin Grattan's play at the City Theatre: Don't ye know that Holy Ireland is dying hard. . . . It's with McQuaid in Maynooth. . . ."

GO AWAY

Still on a theatrical note; the next presentation will be a new play called "Go Away Pat Kennedy". "He's an even bigger nuisance than Niall Toibin," commented Jack Bourke.

TONGUE-IN-CHEEK AWARD

There is no truth in the rumour that Post and Telegraphs Minister Gerry Collins is to be given a special Jacobs Award for his hypocritical performance at that company's Galway function.

GOOD NEWS

The Government has hired a Public Relations firm to improve the Department of Health's national image. Minister Childers has now been removed to the Office for the Preservation of Good News.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Following the news that Ald. Steve Coughlan is to sponsor a research competition some suitable subjects come to mind: Philip Dundon, of "Wallet of Notes" fame and Man Mountain Dean, the "All-in Wrestler" who partnered Coughlan in the non-skid car device factory still awaiting planning permission after 20 years.

DANISH BOY

Gardai last night arrested two women who have been charged under the Official Secrets Act. It is believed that they were employed by the Dana, in Post Office Lane. "My recipe is a top secret", said the Danish Dough-boy.

CUT-PRICE PATRIOTS

Four masked men entered a shop yesterday and held the owner at gunpoint. They shouted "This is for the I.R.A." as they escaped with two pigs' heads.

NO SHOW

An R.T.E. spokesman has denied that the station is to transmit a new Special Courts drama series called, "Sez Des".

ALL A-JAR

Young schoolgirls were shocked this week when a Labour Party "Socialist" showed them a jam-jar which contained a soiled clerical collar. His action was immediately condemned by the Bishop of Cork as conduct unbecoming a Catholic and disrespectful to a sacred vocation.

GET UM-OFF

Progress on the Southill Strip Club: The four city business men involved have appealed to the Minister for Local Government reminding him that Ireland must take her rightful place among the painted ladies of Europe.

DING-A-FLING

Ald. Pat Kennedy, well-known on the social scene, shocked the genteel hostesses of Limerick this week when he was caught playing with a life-size, ding-a-ling, rubber doll, made in his own "image" and stamped "Fitz".

QUINNSWORTH cheap labour shift

Shannon Town Centre and its store are reputedly all unionised, yet the Quinnsworth store employs young boys packing and shelving goods at a princely 10p or 15p per hour.

Nobody objects. Parents of course regard the pay as handy pocket money for the boys while it keeps them occupied for a few hours on Saturdays or Friday nights, but the store could have full-time workers, and Quinnsworth gets full value for its special cheap-labour shift.

SWEET TOOTH

Thousands of city children were given free lollipops yesterday with stickers: "Paddy Kiely for President". A spokesman for Kiely Enterprises in Denmark Street denied that they were behind the stunt.